

## **Status of NH National Guard deployed units as of Oct 30, 2004**

Total number of NH National Guardsmen: 2,700

NH Army National Guard: 1,700.  
800 in Iraq, 67 in Afghanistan, 27 at Fort Drum, NY in preparation for OIF.

NH Air National Guard: 1,000.  
12 in Iraq, 2 Qatar, 1 in Afghanistan, 52 at locations in U.S.

Number of NH Guardsmen overseas: 885

- 1. C Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment (Mountain), based in Manchester.** 180 soldiers in Iraq conducting security and patrol operations.
  - 2. 744<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company, based in Hillsboro, with armories in Claremont and Somersworth.** 150 soldiers in Iraq conducting transportation missions.
  - 3. Headquarters, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, based in Manchester.** 110 soldiers in Iraq. The unit is a command and control element for three battalions, which are conducting security missions.
  - 4. 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, based in Berlin with armories in Lancaster, Littleton, Plymouth, Woodsville, Lebanon and Franklin.** 180 soldiers in Iraq conducting security missions.
  - 5. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery, based in Manchester with armories in Rochester, Portsmouth, Milford and Nashua.**
    - a. 180 soldiers in Iraq conducting security missions.
    - b. 30 soldiers of Charlie Battery, from the Portsmouth Armory, augmenting security operations at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington.
  - 6. 210<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment, based in Peterborough.** 50 soldiers in Afghanistan providing engineering and construction support for Operation Enduring Freedom.
  - 7. Logistics Readiness Squadron, 157<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing, based at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington.** Maj. Michael Mawson serving in Afghanistan.
  - 8. 260<sup>th</sup> Air Traffic Control from Pease/ JFHQ/ Clinic.** 15 air traffic controllers and one member of Joint Forces Headquarters in Iraq. One nurse, Maj. Stephanie Riley, in Qatar.
  - 9. Combat Service Support Team, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade.** 17 NH Army National Guard soldiers representing different units and specialties in Afghanistan to provide mentorship to Afghan National Army in a variety of fields.
  - 10. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery, Rear Area Operations Center .** 28 NH Army National Guard soldiers representing different units currently at Fort Drum, N.Y. training in preparation for command and control mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.
- \* **Note: 3643<sup>rd</sup> Maintenance Company, based in Concord** has provided more than half its guardsmen to augment deploying units.

## UPDATES FROM UNIT COMMANDERS IN THEATER

*Editor's Note: The following updates were emailed by the unit commanders. They were slightly edited for grammar and operational security. This is the sixth installment.*

### **744<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company**

**Capt. Mary Bergner**, of Hampton, is commander of the 744<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company. The unit arrived in Iraq in early March. Its mission has been to transport dry goods, water, food, petroleum products and general supplies to ground units.

Thanks to the support and contribution of costumes from 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Ken Cox's (of Concord) parents we were able to theme our day an "American Luau". Boxes of Hawaiian leis, hats, skirts, shell bras and other Hawaiian themed items were donned by the soldiers. We also had several decorations with a patriotic theme to include a red, white and blue wig.

The events of the day were outlined with the grand prize being a full day off for the winners. Several soldiers immediately got into the comedic side of things with their costumes. The sports tournaments included a basketball and horseshoe competition. A feast was laid out and the joy of eating outdoors without standing in line at the chow hall was a good break. It was great to see our cooks actually serving and thoughts of how much we miss their cooking was a major topic of conversation.

After the meal, we escaped to the Anaconda pool, which no matter how much we complain, we know we are blessed to have it!

We lured soldier after soldier to test the high dive, with many successes and a few losses (Sgt. Glenn Nelson of Plymouth)! A dive was even attempted by myself from the middle dive and proved to be entertaining, not to mention painful on my part. Sgt. Richard Ingram, of Center Barnstead, who was in a strong running for our prettiest Luau girl, entertained us with a jump in full costume.

The hanging around poolside, playing in the water and teasing each other to jump brought back memories of days of less worry and the key thought of how great it is to have such a fun group together.

The end of the day concluded the basketball game, won by Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Dale Garrow of Claremont, Sgt. Jeffrey Randall of Manchester, and Spec. Joshua Nadeau of Vernon, VT. The horseshoes were taken by Staff Sgt. Keith Irwin of Somersworth and Spec. James Kendall of Derry.

All in all it was a fun-filled day that was nice to have everyone around with a break from the normalcy of Iraq – we only had one clearing of the pool for incoming rounds.

The other thing to report is we are finally moved into trailers. What a difference it makes to not breathe in nonstop dust and have an actual bed to sleep in! Our new internet café that we have been so desperately wanting is now open for business as well. Perfect timing of PC's coming in and lines created for personal laptop use. We must thank Spec. Christopher Wentworth's (of Rochester) employee, TurboCam, out of Dover, for being so generous with their contribution of \$10,000 for the troops, resulting in no money coming out of our soldiers' pockets for this wonderful addition.

This is what I call a supportive employer! We also thank those who helped install our internet café: Wentworth, Spec. Anthony Arsenault of Portsmouth, Sgt. Shawn MacPherson of North Reading MA, Spec. John Bachelder of Nashua and Staff Sgt. David Boulanger of Monroe. It is a

fantastic addition to our company area. We have become very comfortable, however, by continuing to build up around our living areas.

We feel the only thing worth moving for is to avoid the rain when it comes. The soldiers have been doing a great job working on their areas and we are now pulling out the Halloween decorations!

Happy Halloween to all of you and I wish you and all the children a happy and safe holiday. We will be dressing as GI Joe this year and the best costume is going to be a hard call!

We have given a much deserved promotion to Spec. Alton Martin (of Charlestown) of the maintenance section and we know he will serve the noncommissioned officer ranks proudly. I send this letter with little news about missions because we have been relatively slow.

The cargo has slowed down and I am to believe that the enemy is a bit more standoffish, with there being not as many "soft" targets in theater.

We are still manning our own gun trucks and the soldiers are what I can call beyond proficient at convoy operations. I believe we are the best in the battalion and probably in the theater.

No convoy is ever taken for granted and we put as much detail into the last one as the first one, continuously sharing lessons learned, and as much being done as possible to mitigate the risk.

We will soon be 100% through our leave roster with all soldiers who wanted to take leave completed.

All soldiers that opted for the 4-day pass are completed. I did not truly understand the dynamics of returning from a break until I was blessed enough to be able to take a 4-day pass.

Your heart and mind never does fully go on break as thoughts of the family you have grown so close to race through your mind before you doze off and immediately when you wake. But waking up at whatever hour you desire and having nothing you absolutely have to do is always a welcome sensation.

Feeling normal for a little while, wearing normal clothes, eating normal food, enjoying a nice cold beer, you remember life as it was.

This is bittersweet and I know that it's even stronger for those who have been home to N.H., to the life and loved ones they have left. Upon returning to base camp, the smiles are wide with memories along with perhaps a little bit of anger in the heart as you remember how good life is and how much you are missing.

It takes a couple days to jolt you back into what our "normal" is right now, but it will not be too much longer until we go back those other lives we led.

The major remedy is talking and being around the family here that you have gotten so used to. Laughter and the stories of the people who have grown more important to you then you realize helps you get by.

This is a roller coaster and I look to the heavens often, thankful for not only such a skilled team but a loving, kind, and funny as heck family as well.

**C Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Regiment)  
"Mountain Company"**

*Capt. Raymond Valas, of Goffstown, is commander of C Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Mountain). C Company's missions include dismounted night ambush, movement to contact,*

*cordon and search, route security, and Civil Affairs security. The unit arrived in Iraq in late March.*

Charlie Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Mountain Infantry has been doing an amazing job this past month. As the men continue to conduct combined arms operations adding aviation and armor assets to complement their infantry missions, the mostly foreign insurgents are forced to abandon previous safe havens.

The company continues to play a role in isolating enemy activity in order to set the stage for successful public elections here in Iraq in just a few months.

This work has been successful, though at times puts Charlie Company men in the middle of dangerous situations. Recently, while providing security for a Civil Affairs Team, a suicide bomber attacked the Green Zone in Baghdad. A squad led by Staff Sgt. Carryl Davis of Concord was nearby, and while unharmed by the blast, they were the first to arrive on the scene. Davis quickly established security and directed his squad while they controlled the situation.

Spec. David Frotton of Newmarket began treating the soldiers and civilians for severe burns and shrapnel wounds, and coordinated with Iraqi Police to move the most severely wounded to a field hospital.

Several lives were saved because of the heroic actions of Spec. Tim Ahearn of Pittsfield, Sgt. Rick Wiltshire of Barnstead, and Sgt. Adrian Meader of Concord who contained the fire and ran through the flames to drag wounded from a burning building. Spec. Robert Young of Loudon and Staff Sgt. Michael LeStage of Manchester began extracting the wounded from the area so they could be evacuated to the hospital, coordinating with both U.S. military and Iraqi Police. All members of the squad then found fire extinguishers to control the blaze and conducted crowd control.

Their actions that day distinguished them as true heroes.

We have received numerous shipments of new equipment and additional armor for our vehicles in the past month, continually improving our capabilities. We have had personal and vehicle armor since day one in Iraq, but we have received upgrade kits to even further improve our operational safety. Also, we have received weapons upgrades, including advanced aiming devices and infra-red spotlights. Despite the dangers of our chosen profession, these constant upgrades make our mission easier and safer to accomplish.

The Company has seen four recent promotions of noncommissioned officers. Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Scott Christie of Epsom, Staff Sgt. Shannon Kulakowski of Raymond, Sgt. Michael Cumings of Troy, and Sgt. Mario Raymundo of Manchester all received their new stripes in October. The promotions were all hard earned and well deserved.

## **210<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment**

***Capt. Craig Lapiana**, of Merrimack, is commander of the 210<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment. His unit has been in Afghanistan since early March. The unit is supporting engineer and construction projects.*

The 210th Engineer Detachment sends you greetings from Afghanistan.

Are you getting ready to vote? We already have over here. We have had ample opportunity to submit an absentee ballot so that our voices will be heard. You get a lump in your throat when you hear President Bush mention that we are making a change over here for the Afghan people because you know it is true. It is not going to happen overnight and like he said, it is hard work but it is taking place as we speak only because of the sacrifice back home and abroad.

The Afghan population is also listening and critiquing what their candidates are saying too. Two presidential elections are in full swing in two different countries and we are paying attention to both. Regarding TV, the local villages don't rely on them to get information but instead listen to radios which are battery and hand powered. There are also newspapers but the majority of the population is illiterate so radio and word of mouth is the best and most used form of communication. Without the use of TV commercials or televised debates, a huge push has been organized by the international community to get as many people as possible to vote. With all the effort being put into this Afghan presidential election, a very large turn out of voters is expected. This is important so that the voice of the country as a whole is heard. The U.S. military is projecting a huge presence to ensure that polling stations are as safe as possible. Even in bordering countries an effort is underway to register Afghan refugees. I recently heard that there are 650,000 refugees living in Pakistan who will be voting.

However, the enemy is still determined to undermine the election process and shatter the peace. They blew up a children's school a few weeks back, which angered everybody over here. Incidents like this only toughen our stance to defeat them. The enemy benefits from a land without laws. They operate on terror and peace is a direct threat to what they want to accomplish. They have increased their rocket attacks this past month but we have safe bunkers and the best equipment possible so we will do fine.

The terrorists simply cannot undermine what your loved ones are working hard to accomplish over here for this nation, that being the establishment of freedom. We are seeing first hand that little by little things are getting better and the country is starting to grow as a whole.

I recently met a police officer, who just graduated from a new police academy program that was established this past year. He was pulling security at a ground breaking ceremony for a new school, which we are starting to help build.

In a country which doesn't have a law system or an established law force this was a very welcomed site. This officer was very proud of his new uniform and showed me his police officer's ID card with pride. Things like this are very important and only possible because we are here making it possible. You should be proud of your soldier serving over here and also proud of the sacrifices you are making on the home front. So things are looking better and better each day.

On base we are still going strong:

Carpenters: Sgt. Michael Dugan of Antrim, Sgt. Russel Evans of Rindge, Spec. Gregory Taylor of Keene, Spec. Gary Teele of Baldwinville, Spec. Krystal Brooks of Mattapan MA, Spec. Robert Carpenter of Northfield and Spec. Bruce Grant of Gardner MA are finishing up a post office expansion. They have been working nights and I think are looking forward to going back on days. The next project coming up will be refurbishing the post's airport terminal.

Electricians: Sgt. Paul Bergeron of New Ipswich, Spec. Benjamin Inman of Nottingham, Spec. Jennifer Gabler of Hebron, Spec. Andrew McEvoy of Laconia, and Spec. Derek Russo of Nottingham have also been doing a lot of work on rewiring the post office. It was a real mess when they arrived and now it is clean, safe and better organized. They should be finished this week. Once they are done, they will help out the other electricians (Staff Sgt. Pros Launh of Peterborough and Spec. Angela Currier of Hill) with installing new wire in modular office buildings on post.

Plumbers: Sgt. Stephen Mitza of Moultonborough, Sgt. Philip Kilby of Pembroke, Sgt. Christopher Dow of Hartland VT, and Spec. Joshua Rasch of Farmington have been working hard on upgrading the venting systems and overall quality of latrines on base. The difference these upgrades make for the service members are amazing.

Horizontal: Spec. James McCabe of Farmington, Spec. William Fohy of Templeton MA, Spec. Joseph Cain of Franklin, and Spec. Justin Spaulding of Bow are still working with their heavy equipment in each camp, spreading smaller sized rock so that people can walk around without worrying about twisting an ankle.

When this base was first established "river bed" rock was used as a base to walk on and is now being replaced because of this section's efforts.

Motor pool: Staff Sgt. Howard Sanborn of Alton, Spec. James Bruno of Rindge, Spec. David Boynton of New Hampton and Spec. Adam Ferland of Claremont are keeping the units vehicles serviced and running which is not an easy task at hand. When parts arrive they put out the extra effort to get them installed quickly.

Headquarters and Operations: Sgt. Keith Killgren of Nashua, Spec. Christopher Lucas of Dublin, Spec. Jason Kovarik of Marlow, Spec. Glenn Griffiths of Keene and Spec. Jason Morand of Derry have been working on many aspects of safety upgrades in Camp Castle and are also working on smaller scale projects in our woodworking shop.

Staff Sgt. Paul Bisbee of Baldwinville, Staff Sgt. Harold Palmer of Concord and Spec. Franklin Dore of Gorham are working each day with the local contractors on post ensuring they are building to standard. Spec. Mark Silva of Claremont has been helping out the Forward Engineer Team (FET) with his AUTOCAD skills and Spec. Marie McGourty of Manchester has been keeping everything organized and running efficiently for them. Spec. Caleb Pride of Swanzey is still a valued asset down in the contracting office which they have commented on more than once. He is doing everything that is being asked of him there and also manages the 210th BBQ grill like a champ.

Sgt. Mark Plummer of Concord has been organizing the unit's humanitarian missions and takes care of all the convoy security aspects. People doing daily operations like Staff Sgt. Davis Belletete of Swanzey, Staff Sgt. John Ford of Penacook, Staff Sgt. Thomas Healy of Peterborough, Sgt. Lance Emond of Greenville and Sgt. Robert Johnson of Templeton MA are keeping missions going with the operational and logistical support, and our S-1 duties are being handled by Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Douglas Lennox of Hillsboro.

OK, that is this month's update and I want to encourage you to keep up the fight back home. We understand it is tough and we appreciate your effort it allows us to keep pushing forward over here. Give the kids a kiss, the dog a pat and send us some "wax paper" New England fall leaves.

PS: We have also just started an effort to collect beanie babies for the kids over here. If you want to help get the details here <http://www.operationbeaniebaby.com>.

### **Headquarters, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade**

*Col. James Guise of Tucson, Arizona is commander for HQ, 197<sup>th</sup> FAB, which arrived in Iraq in early March. Its mission is to provide command and control of three subordinate field artillery battalion, each is from a different state. Command and control functions include mission assignments, providing and coordinating logistics support, maintaining morale, welfare and unit discipline. The three battalions assigned to HQ, 197<sup>th</sup> FAB are from the West Virginia, South Dakota and South Carolina Army National Guards.*

The 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade has been in theater for almost eight months now. The brigade headquarters and the majority of its three battalions are located in the southeastern part

of Iraq near the city of An Nasariyah. There are over 1,300 soldiers under the control of Headquarters & Headquarters Battery, 197<sup>th</sup> FAB. The majority of the brigade is located at Camp Cedar, but we have batteries and sections spread out over 26 remote locations.

Our primary mission has remained the same, the command and control of three artillery battalions. 1-201<sup>st</sup> FA from West Virginia has the primary mission of conducting convoy security for Southern Iraq. 2-147<sup>th</sup> FA from South Dakota is securing stock piles of captured enemy ammunition at various sites in southern Iraq and working with civilian contractors so that it can be destroyed. 3-178<sup>th</sup> FA from South Carolina continues to provide security for fixed communication sites. They also provide quick reaction forces to assist units traveling along the main supply route in our area, and relay medevac requests for them in times of emergency. To date our battalions have driven over 1,300,000 miles escorting convoys, and have either moved or destroyed over 5,000 tons of captured enemy ammunition.

Schools in Iraq started this October, after being delayed one month due to security reasons, mostly north of us. Part of the rebuilding effort in Iraq has been to build, rebuild and supply the schools of Iraq. The 197<sup>th</sup> FAB is a proud part of that effort.

Earlier we had recognized the problems and issues with the local schools in our Area of Operation (AO). The area schools were in very poor condition and had no supplies. The schools had been systematically neglected by the former regime. Of the four school projects that we started as part of our civil affairs mission using the Commanders Emergency Relief Project (CERP) funds, the first to be completed was the Al Habib Village School.

Coinciding with the first day of school for the local children, we conducted Operation Backpack. Operation Backpack is an attempt at getting basic school supplies in the hands of Iraqi school children. Since there are no storage areas in the school classrooms, a simple backpack could serve as a carrying case and storage place for the supplies. Requesting help from family, friends and co-workers back home, members of the 197<sup>th</sup> FAB obtained well over 2,000 backpacks! In the backpacks we handed out to the students on their first day back in their new school were pencils, crayons, writing journals, colored construction paper, and a toy. The 197<sup>th</sup> FAB has contributed in a positive manner to the education of hundreds of Iraqi school children. While the rebuilding efforts will take years to complete, our soldiers have accomplished much in the past seven months for the children of Iraq.

In early November, the entire brigade will be relocated from our current facilities on Camp Cedar to new (and better) facilities on Tallil Air Force Base. Though moving while maintaining our current missions will be challenging, our new home will have a number of advantages over our current facilities.

First of all we will have better living accommodations. On Tallil, all brigade soldiers will be quartered in living trailers, rather than the tents that we are currently occupying. We will also have better and expanded office space. Office space on Tallil will be a combination of an existing (and recently renovated) office building and a set of newly delivered office trailers.

The grounds of the office area have been shaped and topped with gravel in order to shed rain – important in the upcoming rainy season. We will also have better motor pools. Our current motor pools are basically open ground marked out in the desert. We are currently in the process of constructing new motor pool areas on Tallil. Each will be shaped to shed water, and will be covered with gravel. Eventually, concrete pads and permanent shelters are planned. As you can imagine, all of the soldiers are excited and are looking forward to the move.

In a past press briefing, I mentioned how our brigade is coordinating the medical treatment for a two-year-old local Iraqi boy, who was born with club feet. I would like to update you on the

status of little Arshad. Our civil affairs team, along with our brigade surgeon, have been transporting Arshad to the Air Force medical facility for the follow-up appointments after his surgery. He was first in thigh high casts and then in leg casts. The pins have been removed from his feet, and he has healed nicely. At this point he is learning how to walk for the first time. The doctors believe that if his parents do the physical therapy like they recommended, he should walk like a normal child.

About two-thirds of the unit has been able to go home for two weeks R&R leave so far. Many of the soldiers have returned with stories of how not only friends and family have shown their support and admiration, but of how total strangers have gone out of their way to do so. There were many concerns when we arrived if we would be able to get all of our soldiers home on R&R, and it looks like that will happen. We will continue to send soldiers home during November, December, and the first half of January.

At the end of September I was able to visit soldiers from the 2-197<sup>th</sup> who are operating in northern Iraq. We do not have operational control of the 2-197<sup>th</sup> during this deployment, and we have no official oversight of them. But since they are 197 FA soldiers, and I formally commanded the battalion, I thought it would be good to visit them. I, along with the Brigade command sergeant major and the Headquarters Battery commander visited our soldiers in Mosul, Tikrit, and Baqubah. It was a great chance to see some familiar faces, and I was proud to hear what a professional job they are doing with an often challenging mission.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Forward**

***Capt. Matt Boucher**, of Barrington, is commander of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Forward. His unit consists of four platoons each of which is conducting a variety of security mission in Ba'Qubah, Mosul and Tikrit. The unit is known as "White Mountain Thunder" On Oct. 15, one of Boucher's soldiers, Spec. Alan Burgess, of Landaff, was killed as a result of a car bomb. He was buried with full military honors on Oct. 25 in Landaff.*

*The following is the eulogy Boucher delivered at a memorial service in Mosul, Iraq:*

**"Brig. Gen. (Carter) Ham, distinguished guests, fellow soldiers, and friends. We've come together this morning to honor Spec. Alan Burgess, a young soldier, friend, and father whose life was cut tragically short.**

**Alan Burgess was born May 30, 1980 in Tauton, MA. He graduated from Oxbow High School in Bradford, VT in 1999. He had a son, Dakota, born in August of 2000 and in June 2002 he enlisted in the New Hampshire Army National Guard in Woodsville. On October 15, 2004, a terrorist car bomb took his life and wounded us all with his passing.**

**Last month I was here in Mosul escorting our Brigade Commander from NH, Col. Guise, through the different areas of operations that the 2-197<sup>th</sup> MP's have been supporting. We hung around the platoon area that evening and in passing I ended up chatting with Spec. Burgess for a couple minutes. It was just the usual; How are you doing? How are things going? He showed me some of the pictures he had been taking since arriving here. He was quite the photographer and said that he makes picture CD's for anyone that wanted pictures. It didn't seem like much at the time, but thinking back on it, I will always remember that little exchange in the hallway.**

**One person can touch many lives. I know that the members of this unit, friends, and family all have different memories and stories to tell. I ask you to keep those memories**



alive. Although he is no longer here with us, he will live on in the hearts of all the lives that he touched.

**Spec. Burgess made the ultimate sacrifice for his country. This war asks so much of us and our families. Let us all remember Alan's family and the sacrifice they too have been forced to make. I hope that his family and everyone here can find some comfort in knowing that he died making our nation a safer place and that we know he is in a better place now. We will continue to grieve and we will continue to hurt, but we will carry on with our mission. We will honor his memory by doing so. We will never forget Alan Burgess or his sacrifice for our great nation."**

The following are updates from Boucher's platoon leaders. They were sent prior to the death of Spec. Burgess:

2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon update by Capt. David Pearson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon Leader: 2nd Platoon has been busy lately with increased activity in their area of operation in Ba'Qubah, Iraq.

In separate incidents, Sgt. Jonathan Foote of Warren and Spec. William Garneau of Bethlehem sustained minor injuries from improvised explosive devices in mid- September.

Foote sustained a shrapnel injury to his ribs when an IED went off next to his humvee on a routine mission on Sept. 14.

In a similar incident, Garneau suffered minor burns to his hands and wrists when an IED went off next to his convoy as it traveled through Baghdad on Sept. 16. Both soldiers were treated and returned to duty.

Meeting a major goal for September, members of second platoon successfully assisted in recruiting and processing more than 200 Iraqi citizens for the new Iraqi Police force. This mission culminated in escorting the Iraqi Police recruits to Baghdad International Airport for their trip to the Royal Jordanian Police Academy where they will undergo training.

In addition to this mission, the platoon continues to work with a platoon from the 4/293<sup>rd</sup> MP Company of the Third Infantry Division. We provide force protection security for the Diyala Police Headquarters. In addition, we continue to mentor the current Iraqi Police force by providing assistance in criminal investigations and working with the local police academy.

Congratulations are in order for Spec. Keith Hatch and Spec. Aaron Marshal, both of B Btry 2-197<sup>th</sup> FA based in Plymouth and Woodsville, for their recent promotions. Both soldiers pinned on their new rank in a brief ceremony at the Ba'Qubah Police Station in early September.

3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon update by Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Robert Haynes, of Berlin, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon Sergeant: 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, call sign "Bladerunners," in Mosul, have been extremely busy this month. We have been conducting patrols within the city as well as conducting counter mortar patrols, which have proven to be successful.

On September 4, one of our patrols, lead by Staff Sgt. Walter Dellinger of Woodsville, was able to capture a mortar cell as it was firing on coalition forces. This cell is believed to have been responsible for over 100 attacks in the past year and a half. The squad was commended by the Brigade commander for their actions in successfully capturing these insurgents. We have also had our close calls.

On Sept. 14 one of our patrols was hit by a VBIED – vehicle borne improvised explosive device or car bomb. We had two soldiers who sustained injuries from this attack, Spec. Ryan Weeden of North Woodstock and Sgt. Dale Sollars of Bethlehem. Both soldiers are recovering fine and are expected back to duty. As we move into the fall our soldiers have started conducting customs missions for soldiers returning back to the States.

4<sup>th</sup> Platoon update by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Robert E. Teague, of South Berwick, ME, 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon Leader: 4th Platoon continues successful stewardship of the Iraq Police Academy in Tikrit.

Security at the academy remains solid. More than 1,000 Iraqi Police have now been trained in the Transition Integration Program. Graduates from the academy are a valuable commodity to the police forces throughout the city of Tikrit and the entire province of Salah Ad Din. New specialized training programs such as SWAT training have been introduced to the academy. Advanced policing techniques allow Iraqi law enforcement to handle more complex situations and reduce their dependence on US forces. 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division is currently performing joint raids with the Iraqi Police in an effort to move responsibility for local security to them.

Despite recent insurgent activity in other parts of Iraq; the city of Tikrit remains stable and relatively calm, allowing 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division forces to turn their attention to supporting civil works projects and improving quality of life in the area. Such projects as water, sewer and electrical grid improvements foster good relations with the local Iraqi people and create positive momentum towards the goal of creating a free and democratic society.

Our soldiers continue their commendable performance of providing security at both the academy and on the highways. Spirits are high as the Iraqi summer begins to wane. Daytime temps are slipping below 110 degrees F for the first time since the month of May.

4<sup>th</sup> Platoon has also completed "Customs Inspection Training" to check baggage and containers which will be heading home during the expected departure of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division at the beginning of 2005.

1<sup>st</sup> Platoon update by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Gregory J. Fillion, of Littleton, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon Leader: The soldiers of 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon continued conducting their Combat Patrol Escort missions in support of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division Provost Marshal Office. Current missions have taken us past the "Green Line" in the northern sector of Iraq, to the city of As Sulaymaniyah, near the Iranian border. That area of the country is predominantly Kurdish and its environment is a drastic change from the desert area of the Suini Triangle in which we live.

Mountains near As Sulaymaniyah have an elevation of 3000+ feet and pine trees actually grow in this part of Iraq! This area is very pro-coalition forces. It is a very clean area which has not seen an attack in two years.

We also continue to transport detainees throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division's area of operations, as well as provide security for convoys moving supplies/equipment throughout the country of Iraq. The detainees are processed through the Iraqi Court system.

1<sup>st</sup> Platoon continues to conduct the bulk of the missions directed by the Division Provost Marshal's office and we have logged over 1,200,000 miles with our 10 assigned up-armored vehicles.

We continue to provide convoy security to a variety of units to various locations in Iraq, many outside the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division's area of responsibility. We also have continued to provide force protection for forward Operating Base Danger as well as provide security for the weekly Abu Ghraib releases.

The men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon are doing an outstanding job and morale is good as we look forward to the end of our tour of duty.

Support troops update, Staff Sgt. Doug Harvey, of Berlin: It is hard to believe, but September is almost gone and we have passed the seven months in theater milestone. Iraq's weather remains hotter than what we are used to in northern New Hampshire. The day time temperatures average 110 and it cools to a refreshing 80-85 overnight. It has been another busy month in Iraq for the support troops of 2-197<sup>th</sup> FA (MP). The support elements of this unit continued to perform their

vital roles in the successful completion of all unit tasks. Our operations personnel continue to man the 24-hour Tactical Operations Centers and Division Provost Marshal's Office at Division Headquarters in Tikrit as well as the Diayla Provisional Police Headquarters in Ba'Qubah.

Our mechanics have been busy turning the wrenches to ensure the unit's vehicles are properly maintained and operational, while our logisticians have been busy providing the necessary supplies and resources for the company to function.

Our communications personnel are gainfully employed ensuring the unit's capability to communicate whether by radio or land line, while the administrator is kept busy handling the daily personnel issues with running a 180 man company. All members of the support troops have performed their assigned missions with ingenuity and dedication.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Forward**

***Capt. Eric Fessenden**, of Windham is commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Forward. His unit arrived in Iraq in early March. The unit has been conducting security operations.*

We are finishing our eighth month in theater and it has been an extremely busy time for us. We're finding out just how versatile we can be; the mission remains the same however, the requirements are ever changing. These requirements are demanding longer hours from everyone and flexibility like never before. The men of the battery are holding it together and getting it done.

Over the course of this deployment the soldiers of this battery have been a part of something truly amazing, a historical change in military police policy. Our legacy of changing Military Police (MP) doctrine, when you stop and think about it, is nothing short of absolutely incredible. It is especially incredible considering our status as in lieu of (ILO) MP's (Field Artillerymen conducting Military Police operations). I'm extremely proud of each and every one of them.

This month has brought the return of fog and sand storms to our area bringing all the challenges that accompany adverse weather conditions here.

Numerous escape attempts from the Internment Facility were prevented through our soldiers maintaining situational awareness, paying attention to detail, and quick, responsive actions.

The following soldiers were awarded impact Army Commendation medals for their actions and participation in the prevention and apprehension of the above mentioned detainees: Sgt. Michael Gorsuch of Nashua; Staff Sgt. Timothy Grogan of North Berwick, ME; Spec. Joseph Tessier of Newmarket; and Spec. Travis Webber of Elliot, ME.

The Marauder family would like to congratulate Spec. Donald Gates and wife Cassandra of Fremont on the birth of their daughter.

In closing, the dynamics involved with our mission and the ability to manage these dynamics is indicative of the great soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers of this battery, 172<sup>nd</sup> FA FWD Marauders. We ask a lot of the soldiers here with all of the day-to-day taskings, additional escort and guard missions, and base protection and installation improvements and the soldiers have not let us down. A true testament to "Mission First, People Always"; we're American soldiers making the world a better place one day at a time, one piece at a time.

## **Combat Service Support Team, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade**

*Maj. Ralph Huber of Dover, is the commander of the Combat Service Support Team, which arrived in Afghanistan in August 2004 and is providing mentorship to the Afghan National Army in a variety of fields.*

If you have been following the news than you know that on Oct. 9 was a historic day here in Afghanistan. I am proud to say that every member of the team was involved in making the elections a success. Our mission was to support the Afghan National Army (ANA) while it provided support and security to the United Nations and other election officials.

We were part of a team that was responsible for security in six districts across the province. We spent about two weeks preparing for it, and the effort paid off. We had no serious incidents in our area and in fact there were no serious incidents across the entire country.

We are hopeful that we will be returning to our base camp in the next few weeks. However, there are no promises and we could find ourselves here for awhile longer.

Overall we are doing well. The team has played a key part in several historic missions including bringing an end to fighting between rival warlords, securing the Shindand Airfield and helping with the elections. I am proud of what we have done. I hope that you are proud of your soldiers. They have done well for themselves.

## **1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery, Rear Area Operations Center**

*Lt. Col. David Mercieri, of Barrington, is commander of 1-172<sup>nd</sup> FA, RAOC, which is currently at Fort Drum, N.Y. training in preparation for its command and control mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.*

We arrived at Fort Drum on schedule and have settled into our WWII barracks. We began our training program shortly upon arrival with several briefings to help familiarize us to what we can expect and should be aware of during our deployment. To date we have completed an array of individual training topics to include land navigation, weapons qualification, common task training and first aid.

The Team has recently moved to our collective training tasks, which are team orientated courses of instruction. We spent a couple days at the Military Operations in an Urban Terrain Site (MOUT), where the team had to execute three training events. To add to the realism of the training, former Iraqi civilians assist as role players during the training. Having these roles players gave us all a better understanding of what can expect when we begin our mission.

As we proceed with training, our "Granite Fury" Team is viewed by many of the Fort Drum instructors as a prepared, professional and skilled group of soldiers. Every team member has contributed to our success to date. Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class John Ford of Penacook, Staff Sgt. Robert Szczepkowski of Northfield and Sgt. John Lenotte of Nashua provided an excellent class of instruction on Land Navigation. Maj. Mark Leahey of Rochester and Maj. Gregory Blackwell of Dover did a great job preparing and executing a collective training event on convoy operations. Our logistical team of Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Patrick Plante of Easton and Capt. Andrew Anderson of Nottingham have worked wonders with the logistical system. Capt. Rodney Freeman of York, ME and Spec. Derek Russo of Nottingham have done an outstanding job ensuring our administrative and maintenance needs are met.

Maj. Brian Thorne of Worcester, MA and Master Sgt. Donald Fortin of Bedford have met the challenge of coordinating an ever-changing training schedule and Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Stephen Banks of

North Chelmsford and Sgt. Paul Marcoux of Portsmouth have been practically everywhere to ensure hassle free training.

The Team cannot say enough about Capt. Stephen Lavalley's of Derry efforts to install a wireless Internet system for our barracks allowing all of us the opportunity to have e-mail access from our bunks. Having this ability has been greatly appreciated by all.

As we continue with our deployment training the Team remains focused on our mission. We continue to modify our training schedule as time permits to allow the Team to spend more time on what we consider pertinent training. Fortunately for us we have a very solid group of soldiers and are coming together quickly as a team.

**END**